



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE CRAYON.

VOL. III.

JUNE.

PART VI.

W. J. STILLMAN & J. DURAND, EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

PUBLICATION OFFICE, 763 BROADWAY.

THE NATURE AND USE OF BEAUTY.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RELATION OF THE BEAUTIFUL TO THE SUBLIME.

If our readers have become weary of our, perhaps, over-minute and tedious—it may seem even hypercritical, analysis of the theories by which previous investigators have sought to explain Beauty, we would beg them to remember that there must necessarily be many things in a discussion of this kind, uninteresting to those who only care for the results, and many things seemingly finical to those who have the power to proceed with more comprehensiveness than we have shown, but which are, nevertheless, essential to the completeness of a demonstration. We shall briefly re-state the principles we believe ourselves to have established in the previous chapters, before entering upon the consideration of the Sublime. Firstly: Moral beauty is the result of human goodness acting upon and moulding the form and features of the individual—the sentiment of Love in mankind, giving a certain recognizable and significant form to the matter in which it is incarnated; thus, distinctly, spirit-shaping matter; and since the mind again invariably receives in the forms so produced and characterized as beautiful, an evidence of that goodness which has its origin in the broadest and most spiritual human love, and responds to it by love, it is clear that the appearance which we term moral beauty is the absolute type or symbol of the love which was its origin. Secondly: Universal beauty, or that which appears in all the forms of Nature, animate or inanimate, is, analogically, the appearance in the universe of the Divine Love, which was and is constantly, exercised in creating and shaping the forms of the visible world, and that the material qualities which, in the countenance of man we find expressive of spiritual qualities, characteristics of his soul, are, in the face of Nature, expressive of the attributes of the Divine Spirit, the Soul which animates creation. Therefore, Beauty, in the abstract, is the form which Love wears. Now this recognition of Love in Beauty is not an office of the intellect, but purely and simply of sentiment; and so far from our being able to assign a

VOL. III.

WHOLE NO. LVIII.

rational cause to the emotions arising from the beautiful, the instant we attempt to do so, the emotion is lost; reasoning on it being only possible when it is taken as we now take it—in the abstract; the particular impression neither needing nor admitting analytical investigation. We see something which is beautiful: we receive instantly a certain emotion of pleasure—we can understand no reason why, and if we attempt to go behind that emotion, we feel it no longer; although by comparing all the emotions we have received, or rather, our recollections of them, we may connect them into a system in which we shall perceive a general law of cause and effect, by which law we have arrived at the conclusion we announce.

But, as we have before intimated, there are certain expressions of Divine attribute in the universe, and seen with especial distinctness in mankind, which we cannot refer to the beautiful. We find evidences of design in the Creator, and function in the thing created, and these are not beautiful; yet by them we are more forcibly made aware of a Deity* in all that we see, more than by beauty in the object—by the evidence of a marvellous *organization* in Nature, by her unconquerable life and energy, by a thousand qualities which we can in no wise enumerate or define, but which are distinct from the appearances of Beauty, and differing from them in this; that while the latter lead us to quiet and awaken the sentiment of love, the former excite us, and give rise to admiration and wonder in its purest conditions, elevating us by the recognition of a supreme Intelligence. That sensation of *ELEVATION* supplies the word by which we define those qualities collectively—we call them the Sublime—the lofty. If, then, we compare the emotions of the beautiful with those of the sublime, we shall find that in general the former are tranquillizing, the latter exciting—the one class soothes and lulls, the other rouses and carries us up to new heights of admiration and wonder-filled reverence. Thus, we characterize a land-

* We will not insist on our acceptance of the nature of that Deity, but hold our theory as pertinent to any acceptance of Him, so long as it recognizes in Him an intelligent, sentient Influence—the Soul of the universe.

scape under the charm of a tranquil summer afternoon effect, as beautiful; but a storm driving by in gloom, as sublime, because their respective emotions are analogous to those of Beauty and Sublimity. Burke drew a curious distinction between the two, assigning love as the emotion of the former, and fear that of the latter; but the distinction is rather suggestive than correct, because not only is fear, as he regarded it, and as it is generally understood, not an essential part of the emotion of the sublime, but it is incompatible with the full enjoyment of it, and to a rightly organized and disciplined mind no display of the power or presence of Deity should excite fear, other than that kind that the psalmist alludes to, when he exclaims, "how wonderfully and fearfully we are made!"—the reverential fear of God which is continually enjoined on us. Therefore when Burke says, "those virtues which cause admiration and are of the sublimer kind, produce terror rather than love, such as fortitude, justice, wisdom, and the like;"—he only expresses the effect that those attributes have on a person evilly disposed, and to whom justice, wisdom, &c., are naturally sources of apprehension; because wisdom implies detection, and justice, punishment; but this terror is far from sublime, and though with all men as conscious of some degree of obnoxiousness to Divine justice, there may be some degree of this terror, it arises from our human frailty, rather than from the acknowledgment of the presence of an all-powerful and all-wise Judge; and we may be taught by Nature, in which the Sublimity that bears token of God's power is never unaccompanied by the Beauty which testifies to the presence of His love, that in Him tenderness goes hand in hand with justice. The wisdom which is the terror of the disorderly, is the safety and delight of those who keep the Divine law.

But in order to define more closely the distinction we have drawn, we will examine more minutely the emotions of the beautiful and the sublime. We regard a flower, which, in its delicate tintings and exceeding grace of form, we accept as inimitably beautiful; and when thus accepted, it awakens in us a pure sentiment of love, unmingled with any perception of its posi-

tion, its function, or any design manifested in it; but when we come to study its wonderful organization, that sentiment gives way to admiration, and we become conscious of a new inspiration, as the soul mounts in sympathy to the Source of all design and order. It is in the supreme Intelligence that we find the first principle of the sublime. It is in this case comparatively feebly felt, only because, regarding things as we do from the point of human weakness, we are more powerfully impressed by these displays of the Deity's agency, which seem, from having overcome greater material difficulties, to be the results of greater power or higher contrivance; though, from the Divine point of sight, the great is no more wonderful than the little, and the smallest flower has every element of sublimity in it, possessed by an Alp or an universe; for Deity is equally present in everything he has created.

This granted (for it is most true), let us place ourselves where we may overlook a lovely valley, where winding river, and bending tree, with fields with flowers waving in the glad sunlight, and inviting groves, charm the eye and lull the spirit with all the force of Beauty; but beyond which, far off, the battlement crag of some snow-crested Alp, rears itself solemnly, and defiant of storm and decay, looks down with the majesty of primeval granite, even yet resting from the effort with which it climbed to its fearful height, and regards the dreary plains below, with a cold and silent immobility. In that broad and tranquil valley, lies and sleeps the BEAUTIFUL; but that aspiring crag-side, climbs the SUBLINE; both expressed in the most palpable and distinctive types which Nature offers us outside of the qualities of human expression. If we analyze minutely, the peculiar emotions which the scene gives rise to, we shall find, as in the flower, that its beauty lies in infinite delicacies of graceful form and exquisite tint; in harmonious and flowing lines and harmonized colors, or generally in qualities which impress us with repose and tranquillity. These we feel distinctly and unmistakably; they need scarcely more than pointing out; but the emotions of the sublime are more involved to our instant regards. We find, firstly, an expression of energy, action, in the lines and forms of the mountain; the forms being those, which by their angularity and rectilinearity, indicate function of forceful motion or of resistance, suggestive of an inner influence exerted on the matter composing it; a spirit, in some kind, organizing it for motion or resistance. All highly sublime mountain-forms have this characteristic form, but it is not because they are

angular or rectilinear merely, that they are sublime; for we often see confused masses of the same essential characteristics of form, of great size, but repulsive and ugly, rather than sublime—the true distinction being in the evidence of order and symmetry of organization—in other words, in the mountains proclaiming themselves to be the result of design, originated by a sufficient wisdom, and not the chance-thrown effects of some great accident. If, then, in mountain forms, we lose this manifestation of design, and promise of function in some possible way, we lose also, their sublimity, and this loss may be shown in two ways—either by interference with the expression of symmetry and unity of action, where masses are entirely disorderly, and so ignore organization; or by the wearing down of angular forms to rounded peaks, by which all distinction of members is obliterated, and all evidence of unity of origin or design is lost; for unity requires distinct individualities that there may be an union, and to perceive design we need the showing of a law, which can only appear by the coinciding obedience of several distinct objects. The more perfectly, therefore, a mountain-form, in the uniformity of its division into masses, gives evidence of all its parts having been subject to the same organizing impulse, even to entire parallelism of its lines and similarity of masses, the more sublime it is. Our Alleghany peaks, therefore, in their single positions, have very little sublimity from their rounded and rolling outlines, and to realize in them the sentiment of the sublime, we must consider them as a chain, when from the absolute similarity of the peaks to each other, rolling away into immeasurable distance like billows of solid earth, we receive an emotion of the grandest character. It is not size, therefore, which constitutes sublimity; for the hills in the lake districts of England, though comparatively small affairs, are more sublime than any of our Alleghany peaks, Catskill, Adirondacks, or even the White Mountains, for the reason, as it seems to us, that their structure declares more evidently the creative organization of which they were the result, than do our older and element-worn mountains, huge though they are.

If, however, we receive from mountains generally, a more palpable impression of sublimity, as in some way connected with great size, an impression which seems at first blush, to oppose a reference of the sublime to design or evidence of organic law, it is only because we receive with that instinct of design or of the presence of an organizing spirit of wisdom, an idea of

degree, according to the material difficulties which have been overcome; while truly we should receive the emotions which belong to sublimity in the same degree as we perceive the completeness of the organization; or, in the exact measure in which we are able to realize design or function, or whatever way it may be that the supreme Intelligence proclaims and expresses itself in its works. So when we perceive sublimity in action, as in a war-horse on the field, while we should only regard him as beautiful when in repose, it is because, when in action, he becomes the object of more intense admiration, through his wonderful organization and the marvellous contrivance shown in him; while in repose these disappear under the graceful line and exquisite modulation of the surface. From these things, it appears that the sublime appears purely in action, or where action may be shown or predicated in some way; and this, we are persuaded, because effective and just action always implies high and perfect organization, and this, again, supreme intelligence in the Cause of things—the true emotions of the sublime consisting in being carried up to the instinctive, rather than the rational, recognition of something above ourselves, to an influence whose wisdom and power are one.

But to come to man, in whom the distinction is at once more complete and the comparison more elaborate, we shall all perceive that we characterize the ideal of womanhood as beautiful, while to attribute Beauty to manhood, is at the same time to mark it as effeminate; and to reverse the view, we admit a truly ideal man to be the sublimest work of God; and woman in her turn becomes sublime only when she leaves the gentleness and repose, which are elements of Beauty, and appears in unaccustomed energy and force of character, usurping in a noble manner the functions of manhood. The physical conformation of the sexes shows the same distinction, that of man tending always in its contours to angularity and rectilinearity, expressive of action, and clearly showing purposeful organization, with sharp-lined features, marked and oftentimes rugged brow, full of the severity of thought; and the rounded and softened forms, the infinitely undulating outlines of the figure, full of grace and repose, the fair, open brow, and mouth so exquisitely expressive of every shade of emotion, all belong to the womanly ideal, in which the muscular organization—the bony structure, all, in fact, that proclaims function or action, seem sedulously hidden from sight. Burke, and some other writers have remarked this distinction in general terms, concluding almost

invariably, that we can never attribute Beauty to manhood; but the converse of the proposition, that sublimity is the seal and stamp which the Creator has placed on the man, they have never recognized, mainly, we believe, because being men, they were not attracted to the qualities of their own sex so much as to cause them to dwell on, and develop them as abstractions. In order to elucidate this point, we one day asked a woman of thorough artistic education and natural feeling, which of the two great qualities we are treating of, was most attractive to her, that which we term sublimity in man, his energy and expression of purpose, or the beauty of her own sex—she replied, “The beauty seems as nothing to me, the sublimity to be almost everything.” The analogy between the physical and moral types, is here most complete and satisfactory. Joan of Arc on the battle-field, animated by heroism, raised above the powers and capacities of her sex—tender and fragile woman under the torture, conquering by the firmness and strength of her spirit the efforts of brute force to subdue her, enduring, laboring, or struggling for a noble and lofty end, is sublime; but while she remains so, we only admire her as a heroic woman, capable by spiritual energy of leaving the province of her woman’s nature; her beauty is lost sight of, except in the degree that it heightens the surprise we feel at her heroism; while man approaches the beautiful by the possession of feminine tenderness, gentleness, and devotion. The pure types we, perhaps, never see, for no woman exists without capacity for the display of the sublimest moral traits, nor does any man of true soul lack some mingling of the self-sacrificing, wide-loving devotion of the genuine daughter of Eve. And thus it is through all the forms of Nature; nothing sublime exists without some veil of beauty; no rock but softens its massiveness and sternness, by the wearing away of its edges and angles by the weather-work and tender harmonies of lichen-colors. The oak, standing, is draped by the ivy; and, fallen, by mosses and ferns, and it moulders and decays into soft forms, rich in play of color, and modulations of light and shade. The storm-cloud, grand and sublime in its purpose of devastation and deluge, still climbs in soft and swelling forms of mist, golden in the sunlight or melts away in tenderest gradations to invisibility; and even in the forms of purest expression of function and contrivance, those of the muscular system of man, the knitting of sinews and muscle is half rounded and hidden, especially when, as in the Antinous, they are left to repose, and Function sleeps while Beauty veils it from the sight; and so, through the

whole creation, the Beautiful and the Sublime wander hand in hand, heightening and intensifying or harmonizing and softening each other. Now, as Beauty is the expression of the divine Love, so Sublimity is that of the divine Wisdom, both manifest in all that is—God visible in the universe. And thus when the great Artist, through the infinitude of His works, had led Life through successively higher expressions of that Love and Wisdom, he perfected his Eden-ideal by the fullest and only complete embodiments of those attributes—Man and Woman; and the Sublimity and Beauty which crown them for ever, flow through all creation—visible everywhere, the soul of Nature—the mythic archangels Michael and Raphael standing ever before His throne, and proclaiming His presence perpetually to the sense, and for us typified and embodied for ever in the works of the supreme two in Art, our Michael and Raphael, Buonarrotti and Sanzio.

We determine our comparison here. It is mainly from not having perceived this inevitable distinction that writers on the Beautiful have failed to define clearly even their own impressions. Burke, as we have said, indicated it, but was unable to carry it out fully. Ruskin everywhere confuses the two, in his "Vital Beauty," having united them in one, and in his definition of the types of typical Beauty, has assigned the expressions of the sublime to the beautiful. Thus Infinity, which he makes "the type of the Divine Incomprehensibility," Unity, "the type of the Divine Comprehensive-ness," and Moderation, "the type of Government by Law," are clearly attributes of the Sublime; while Repose, which he gives as "the type of the Divine Permanence," is assuredly of Beauty; and Symmetry which, with him, is the type of the Divine Justice," seems rather the type of the divine Benevolence, "which sendeth its rain alike on the just and the unjust," knowing all men as His children, and giving to all the greatest measure of happiness which they are capable of receiving, making Himself a stranger to none save as they make themselves strange to Him. His Incomprehensibility proclaims the depth of His wisdom, for it is unfathomable; Comprehensiveness, the perfection of His contrivance; and Moderation, the self-control of Him who is a law unto himself, the quality which in man is the most majestic and God-like of all. The "Repose" of Ruskin's theory is assuredly an attribute of Beauty, as he makes it; but the Parity which he makes typical of the Divine energy, we should prefer to believe the type of vitality, which may be assuredly referred to Love, which is the life of all things.

We have finished with theorizing; and if we should do no more, we should have only solved a curious problem, having no more value than the elucidation of a mathematical principle; but it will be remembered that we promised in the chapter on the Nature of Beauty to find some practical conclusions, which we shall do in the subsequent chapters: firstly, in showing how we may attain that realization of the Ideal which every man and woman must make of themselves, the cultivation of the moral beautiful and sublime in them, the noblest of all forms of artistic study, and by which we develop immortal ideals; and secondly, in the clearer perception of those qualities in external Nature which become matter of consideration for Art.

REMINISCENCES.

By Rembrandt Peale.

THE PAINTER'S EYES.

PERHAPS there is no recollection of the past events of my life of greater value, than my experience in regard to the preservation of sight, which can be duly appreciated by no class of human beings, more than by artists. That I, in my 79th year, am now able to paint all day and read half the night, is owing to the care I have taken of my eyes, after having greatly injured them.

Prior to my eighth year, my occupation, besides the usual sports of children, was in the use of carpenter's tools, making boats and boxes, and stretching frames for my father; I made a paint-box for myself, which I furnished with old bladders of paint and rejected brushes, long before I tried the use of them. This box was long my travelling companion, even to London. Such healthy employments, gave no fatigue to the eyes, hitherto only moderately occupied, at a madam's school, in learning to spell in two syllables. At eight, I was sent to a master's school, and being placed on a bench with boys of my own size, who were more advanced; when it came to my turn, I was dumb with terror and mortification, and the spelling passed over me; but at night, through the kindness of an elder sister, who went to the same school, I studied earnestly, and learned to multiply my two syllables into four, confident that I should pass; but the boys on each side of me, supposing me still incapable, kindly skipped me. At first I silently submitted to this indignity, relying upon my night-studies to enable me outspell the class, and to read tolerably well. Anxious to repair my character, I persevered in my studies at home and the courses of the school, so that in six weeks I was in the highest class. My sister had taught me the single rule—I taught her the double rule of three. My pride was relieved, but my eyes suffered by the effort, under the flickering light of a dipped tallow candle. Modern students, enjoying the luxury of gas light, can scarcely realize the miseries of a candle.

It was the same sister's example that excited me to the effort of drawing. An elegant album had been presented to her,